



Schoharie County Operations Review Committee

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Alicia Terry - Chair

Gilboa Supervisor

Harold Vroman

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Alan Tavenner

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Eric Stein

President & CEO Cobleskill Regional Hospital

Dan Crandell

Public Works Commissioner

Bonnie Post

Director of Community Services

John Riedl

Superintendent, Margaretville Central School (Retired)

Schoharie County Operations Review Committee:

November 29, 2021

Present: Alicia Terry, Dan Crandell, Eric Stein, Bonnie Post, Harold Vroman, John Riedl, Alan Tavenner

Also Present: Don Airey, Bill Federice, CJ Smith (Personnel Director), Steve Wilson (County Administrator), Korsah Akumfi (Confidential Secretary to the County Administrator), Mary-Ann Wollaber-Bryan (Treasurer), Jennifer Fernandez, Mark Southworth, Sheryl Largeteau (Clerk of the Board of Supervisors), Lisa Thom (Director of the Real Property Tax Office), Nancy Dingee (Office of the Aging), Scott Haverly (IT Director), Lisa Thom (DSS Commissioner), Rebecca Stanton-Terk (Village of Cobleskill Mayor), Amy Gildemeister, Ph.D. (Public Health Director), and Kayla Redmond

Alicia Terry brought the meeting to order at 8:34 am.

Harold Vroman moved to approve the minutes from July 12, 2021, as corrected. Dan provided a second and the motion was carried 6-0.

Alicia Terry introduced the Committee to the County Administrator's presentation, *Stop Kicking the Can Down the Road*. She stated the presentation was produced at the November 19, 2021, Board of Supervisors meeting to review potential problems in the County's financial operations and budget. The report was developed also to provide solutions to the issues found. County Administrator, Steve Wilson was introduced and asked to give a brief review of the report to the Committee.

Steve Wilson began to summarize the report and brought to light some of the County's financial issues and how it impacts economic growth and development. He explained that there is a need for the County to develop a new financial management system to tackle some of the financial management struggles and help improve overall efficiency and effectiveness. Steve Wilson laid out the necessary steps for creating the system.

1. Invest in technology to reduce the cost of routine financial trends and zoom in on cost increases.
2. Pull the workforce together to easily and effectively collaborate and work well together.
 - a. Training for essential Human Resources and Financial Management staff
 - b. Number crunchers to support existing functions and department needs
3. Provide this workforce technically proficient supervision.
4. The audit functions to remain in the elected Treasurer's office and be strengthened by the establishment of an audit committee composed of technical specialists to review state audit reports to discuss and resolve issues.

He explained that this system's ability to improve problems within the County's financial functions will slowly generate savings over a period of time. Steve Wilson explained that one struggle the County faces is the lack of sufficient information needed to make good budgetary decisions with regard to operational costs. When asked for an example of this, Steve Wilson stated that determining the exact number of County employees poses a challenge as this number is not currently reconciled among departments. This may cause increases in the budget that may not be necessary. He stated that the payroll officer in the Treasurer's office can report how many employees are getting paid at a certain time. The Personnel department knows how many roster cards are filed and the budget shows how many positions each department wishes to fill and/or currently funds.

However, these numbers that often vary, do not give a good representation of the cost needed to budget efficiently. Steve Wilson believes technology will help the County reconcile expenses.

Steve Wilson also stated that the new technology will help assist in reconciling expenses monthly. It is believed that these reports are not currently being generated as the current software is at times difficult to use. Harold Vroman stated that when he was chairman of the Finance Committee, he used to get monthly reports, but he admitted they no longer receive them.

Steve Wilson began to explain the employee structure of the new system. He mentioned there will be twenty (20) new positions created to fulfill the functions needed to make this new system work. He stated nineteen (19) of these positions will come from those that already exist within the departments. Steve Wilson indicated that this is a very involved process as civil service will play a large role in the creation of new positions.

In his presentation, a timeline was provided which gave a visual of the set up and implementation of the creation of the new financial system he wishes for the Committee to consider.

Steve Wilson then addressed questions and concerns from the Committee members. This included questions about the type of technology, employee selection for the new system, and collateral disruptions within departments.

Steve Wilson clarified that the employees will not be moved out of the offices they are currently working in. The non-financial functions will be distributed to other staff so that one person can focus solely on number crunching and other financial functions. They will have the guidance by other staff with similar responsibilities.

Eric Stein expressed his support of the consolidation of financial functions and explained how it has impacted the Hospital's performance on a private sector level.

Treasurer, Maryann Wollaber-Bryan takes the floor and explained how financial functions are impacted by NYS law. She also expressed her concern that the potential for a new financial system is being rushed. The Treasurer urged the Committee to reconsider the salary for the potential Deputy County Administrator position as the enrollment of benefits would add additional expenses. Maryann Wollaber-Bryan expressed her wishes to purchase a new financial software, identify the reports and data needed to produce to the Board, and identify the problems and solutions prior to reconstructing the current County's government system. She educated the Committee with her findings of other treasurers in surrounding counties and how this type of reorganization has impacted their facilities and functions. She asked Jen Fernandez and Mark Southworth to briefly explain what their functions in the Treasurer's office are and how they may be able to aide in obtaining the information the Board needs.

Jen Fernandez, payroll officer explained that she is willing to provide information if and when she is asked to do so. She emphasizes that there is a general lack of communication which seems to be the largest obstacle the Treasurer's office faces. She stated that it does take her some time to calculate a report, but since payroll is not inputted manually the process is quick and efficient.

Mark Southworth touched on the accounting and fund balance functions. He indicated the lack of communication is a problem. Mark Southworth stated that there are several reports in the ACS system that the County does not use that may be worth looking into.

Maryann Wollaber-Bryan closed by stating she encourages anyone to sit down with her department to work out any kinks and have a discussion about what the Board of Supervisors need to accurately resolve expenditure and budgetary problems.

CJ Smith, Director of Personnel and Civil Service emphasized that civil services plays a huge factor when it comes to the reconstruction of the County. Civil Service says, "people don't just move." All 19 positions would be civil service positions which would be classified by the Committee and later classified by the Personnel department. CJ Smith indicated that by civil service law, the position will need to be advertised. If the position is newly created, it would be open and competitive which means anyone in the community can apply for and test for the position. She mentioned that it would be a huge deal and will take time to get everything in order. This does create a risk to the employees applying for the positions.

Amy Gildemeister, PH.D. (Public Health Director) addressed the concern that if a salary is not in her department's budget line, she does not receive special grant funding from NYS to pay for the salary of that position. She indicated there may be other departments that will run into this issue.

Scott Haverly, IT Director discussed how the current ACS system poses some inefficiencies. He stated that currently the departments have a lot of manual entry which increases error rate. Scott Haverly explained how IT will look at the new technology in order to purchase the best fitting software for our place of business. The hope is to eliminate the paper exchange and reduce the errors and human re-entry.

Village of Cobleskill Mayor, Rebecca Stanton-Terk took the floor and stated her opinions about the potential reorganization. She read through highlights of the meeting minutes from earlier in the year that she felt were important points for the Committee to keep in mind. The Mayor of Cobleskill emphasized her frustration in the amount of time it has taken the Committee to decide

on the reorganization proposal, but also expressed her concerns of moving too swiftly toward a decision on such a major project.

Alicia Terry responded by stating that the Committee has received a large amount of information and feedback and suggested that the Committee pause on any decision making to have the opportunity to digest everything that had been presented. Discussions with the department heads will continue with the County Administrator. The Committee agreed to meet again at 8:30am on Monday, December 13, 2021, for further discussion.

John Reidl agreed that the presentation provided a lot of information, and he did not expect the Committee to make a final decision on the reorganization just yet. He touched on how much he has learned speaking with the different department heads. John Reidl noted the difficulty the department heads face when budgeting for issue related costs such as costs to combat the opioid pandemic.

Dan Crandell stated that he believes the Committee has what it needs to move forward with approving the new software purchase. However, he does not believe the Committee will be prepared to move forward with a decision on the reorganization by the end of this year. Alan Tavenner agreed, the Committee does not need to make a decision in accordance with the timeline laid out in the proposal.

Harold Vroman requested for the Treasurer's office to provide the Finance Committee with a monthly report.

Alicia Terry brought the discussion to a close by confirming the date and time of the next meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn. Alan Tavenner moved to adjourn, Bonnie Post provided a 2nd, and the motion was carried 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am.

Recorded by:

Kayla Redmond